DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 379 742 EA 026 470

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TITLE The Principal's Role in Evaluating Professional Support Personnel.
INSTITUTION National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, Va.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Feb 95
CONTRACT R117Q000467
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1903 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1537 ($2, members; $3, nonmembers; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT NASSP Practitioner; v21 n3 Feb 1995

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Competence; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; *Job Performance; Models; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Personnel Evaluation; Pupil Personnel Workers; *School Personnel

ABSTRACT

Among the principal's most powerful tools for school improvement and effectiveness are program and personnel evaluation. Professional specialists, however, are especially difficult to evaluate. This document presents the Professional Support Personnel (PSP) Evaluation Model for evaluating nonteaching, nonadministrative professionals. These personnel provide pupil services, instructional support services, academic/curriculum development services, and special education services. The PSP model is comprised of the following steps: (1) identify system needs; (2) identify personnel duties; (3) select performance indicators; (4) set performance standards; (5) document job performance; (6) evaluate job performance; and (7) maintain/improve professional service. The document describes the goals and key features of the evaluation systems used by the Des Moines, Iowa, Public Schools; Jefferson County Public Schools, Golden, Colorado; the Alabama Department of Education; the Delaware Department of Public Instruction; and the Georgia Department of Education. The evaluation systems share the following elements: a purpose that promotes professional development; the use of multiple data sources; and jointly developed criteria and procedures. (LMI)

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ED 379 742

NASSP

PRACTITIONER

VOL. 21, NO. 3 THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE ON-LINE ADMINISTRATOR FEBRUARY 1995

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The Principal's Role in Evaluating Professional Support Personnel[1]

Some of the most powerful tools for school improvement and effectiveness that the principal has are program and personnel evaluation. Strategic plans, mission statements, and school improvement plans are important documents for defining priorities and goals, but they are not sufficient by themselves. There must be people skilled in implementing plans and programs, making improvements, and working toward fulfilling the school's mission. No school or program is better than the people who deliver its services. Programs and the people responsible for implementing them must be assessed regularly to maintain standards and improve performance. Evaluation is an essential duty for the principal of a successful school.

While personnel evaluation is fundamental, it often fails to receive the attention it deserves because of the demands that compete for the principal's time. In most schools principals are responsible for evaluating at least 30 to 40 teachers and the specialists who support the educational program. Specialists' diverse responsibilities make them particularly difficult to evaluate because they do not fit easily into the categories of teacher or administrator for which evaluation procedures usually exist. The Professional Support Personnel (PSP) Evaluation Model presented here is a model for evaluating non-teaching, non-administrative professionals that logically links evaluation to improvement.

Who Are Professional Support Personnel and Why Evaluate Them?

Professional support personnel include counselors, nurses, librarians/media specialists, school psychologists, and others who have specialized training and who offer a broad range of services to students. As schools provide and coordinate an ever-wider variety of services, the increasing numbers of specialized support staff play more important roles in the school's mission. Principals are responsible for supervising and evaluating the many professionals who are both full-time and itinerant. In a typical elementary school, 30–45 percent of the professional staff may be support personnel.[2] Principals cannot afford to overlook this substantial portion of their staff in realizing an optimal program.

Evaluating professional support personnel presents challenges that can deter the efforts of conscientious principals. Support professionals often have more than one supervisor, sometimes in the central office or in another school, which raises questions of who is responsible for evaluation and how to integrate performance information from multiple sources. Support staff members' training in areas where most principals have limited expertise makes it more difficult for principals to judge performance.

Support personnel duties are such that observation (the primary mode of data collection for teacher evaluation) does not readily assess the range of responsibilities that their job descriptions dictate. Evaluation is difficult for principals and others whose programs depend on effective delivery of specialized services and require an approach different from traditional appraisal.

Categories of Professional Support Personnel

1. Pupil services personnel (e.g., counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and school nurses)
2. Instructional support services personnel (e.g., dean of students, library/media specialist, and work-study supervisor)
3. Academic/curriculum development services personnel (e.g., directors, coordinators, content specialists, gifted and talented resource specialists, and consultants)
4. Special education personnel (self-contained classroom teachers, consulting resource teachers, and speech/occupational/physical therapists).

1. This work was supported by the Office of Research, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education (Grant No. R117Q000467). The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and no official support by the U.S. Department of Education is intended or should be inferred.

2. Percentages are based on the number of people who provide support services, including special education personnel, and not "full-time equivalents." In a similar analysis of a high school, it was found that 20–25 percent of the staff members provided support services.

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Major Areas of Responsibility

The following categories provide a framework to identify the duties of professional support personnel. All focus on sustaining or improving the performance of the target audience: the students.

1. Planning/Preparation. Designing activities that change the program or its implementation.

2. Intervention. Delivering services to improve skills/functional abilities or inform recipients.

3. Consultation. Collaborating with school personnel and/or parents to assist with and coordinate the delivery of services to students.

4. Staff Development. Facilitating the staff's achievement of professional goals.

5. Liaison/Coordinator. Coordinating information and program delivery within the school and between the school and its major constituents.

6. Assessment/Evaluation. Gathering and interpreting data from individuals, groups, or programs to evaluate needs/performance.

7. Administrative/Management. Organizing, directing, or coordinating programs that include responsibility for budgeting, staffing, reporting, and similar activities.

8. Professional Responsibilities/Development. Developing and improving individual competence and skill and delivering services consistent with professional standards.

What Are States Doing To Facilitate the Evaluation of Professional Support Personnel?

Most states (79 percent) mandate evaluation of all certificated employees, yet most school systems still do not have a prescribed evaluation process for professionals such as counselors, nurses, librarians/media specialists, and school psychologists. Evaluation procedures and systems are almost universally in place to assess teachers and administrators, but few states or local school systems have developed equivalent procedures to evaluate professional support personnel who perform duties other than instruction.

According to a 1993 national survey, states provide different levels of support for evaluation, depending on the professional group. Fifty-two percent of the states were found to provide guidelines to evaluate teachers, but only 36 percent provide guidelines to evaluate school counselors. Other professional support groups such as nurses and psychologists typically receive even less state assistance in developing and disseminating evaluation guidelines. Some local school systems have developed their own evaluation criteria and procedures, examples of which are highlighted below.

At best, principals have splintered or incomplete approaches to evaluating support professionals, in spite of the growing and invaluable roles played by specialized staff whose duties and responsibilities are fundamental to students, teachers—the entire educational enterprise.

How Do We Evaluate Professional Support Personnel?

A meaningful and productive personnel evaluation system should address the unique contributions that each employee makes to achieving the school's mission. The issues noted above make this goal especially challenging for professional support personnel.

The Professional Support Personnel Evaluation Model presented here defines an evaluation process prescriptive enough to structure the evaluation task, yet open enough to address the diverse role demands of a broad range of educational professionals. Handbooks are available that adapt the PSP Model to school counselors, nurses, psychologists, and library/media specialists.

The Professional Support Personnel Evaluation Model

The model proposes a seven-step evaluation cycle. The first four steps require close attention during implementation, but only periodic review for relevance of needs and priorities later on. The last three steps should be repeated routinely to promote opportunities for individuals to improve performance.

Steps in the PSP Evaluation Model

Step 1: Identify System Needs. Each school system has needs that reflect its community and that are met through the efforts of all personnel.

A systematic review of the needs of the community and school system will help clarify the system's goals and priorities. Many school systems have undertaken this process and developed mission statements and/or strategic plans that account for relevant variables such as financial and personnel resources.

Step 2: Identify Duties. Once articulated, system needs can be translated into program goals and ultimately into appropriate descriptions of duties and responsibilities for those who implement the programs. A direct relationship must first be created between school goals and programs, then between the programs and the people who implement them. This requires making the connection between lofty purposes and front-line people. Are school counselors, for example, responsible for activities that help achieve program goals? Do the guidance program's goals contribute to the goals of the school and the school system?

Step 3: Select Performance Indicators. Because behavior must reflect job performance to be evaluated, this step involves identifying and selecting behaviors (performance indicators) that reflect key professional responsibilities which, in turn, reflect program priorities.

While professional responsibilities should capture the essence of the job, it is difficult, if not impossible, to document the fulfillment of professional responsibilities without anchoring them in daily activities and selecting the activities most important to the school's goals. Thus, it is necessary to sample behaviors that are both measurable and indicative of the job, such as guidance counselors coordinating career and college exploration activities.

Step 4: Set Performance Standards. Setting standards involves determining a level of acceptable performance and then determining levels classified as exemplary, superior, etc. Program needs, resources, the position's purpose, and other factors make performance standards vary from school to school and/or from year to year. The model is a method for setting standards rather than an attempt to prescribe performance standards.

Step 5: Document Job Performance. Documentation is the recording of sufficient information about an individual's performance to support his or her professional development and to justify personnel decisions based on the evaluation. Mutifaceted data collection is a good

means to address the challenges of more than one supervisor, specialized training, and diverse responsibilities in evaluating support personnel. Conferences with program directors, questionnaires, analyses of service summaries, program plans, and activity schedules help principals legitimize their role of integrating job performance information from many sources.

Step 6: Evaluate Performance. Evaluation is the comparing of an individual's documented job performance with the established duties and performance standards. Depending on the time of comparison, this analysis can provide ongoing feedback to personnel or information for decisions regarding programs and/or personnel. The conference itself is an occasion for candid communication between evaluator and evaluatee. The discussion should at least identify discrepancies between standards and performance, explore reasons for the discrepancies, and consider new program objectives and areas for improvement.

Step 7: Maintain/Improve Professional Service. With its emphasis on both improvement and accountability, Step 7 brings the evaluation process full circle. Formative aspects of evaluation, intended to recognize noteworthy performance, combined with immediate and intermediate feedback for performance improvement and correction where needed, should continue throughout the evaluation process and are implicit in the model. It is beneficial to provide an explicit step for maintaining or improving professional service as the object of the evaluation cycle and as an entrée into the following cycle.

The model provides a rational mechanism to align goals, programs, and personnel duties; it provides a sound and consistent evaluation system for all support personnel; and it structures the fundamental task of the principal: to engage the staff in achieving the school's goals.

TO ILLUSTRATE

Approximately one-third of the state departments of education have developed evaluation criteria and procedures for at least one area of professional support personnel. Some school systems have filled this void by developing evaluation procedures specifically for professional support personnel. Examples of both local and state evaluation systems are provided below. Despite differences in complexity and geography, the following elements are common to all systems:

- The purposes of evaluation are to promote professional improvement and identify staff members who do not meet performance standards.
- Multiple sources of information are used to assess job performance.
- Evaluation criteria and procedures were developed with the assistance of support personnel and administrators.

DES MOINES, IOWA, PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Personnel Categories with Evaluation Systems: All personnel who provide support services: consultants, counselors, librarians, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, speech-language pathologists, work experience coordinators, etc.

Goals of Evaluation System: To enhance the delivery of specialized services, provide a common language for describing service delivery, use in conjunction with the Des Moines Framework for Effective Teaching, provide information on effective support service practices, and continue pursuing excellence in education.

Description of Evaluation System: The Framework for Effective Support Services is organized into four components: interpersonal skills, technical skills, management/organizational skills, and professional practices used in evaluating service staff. Each of these areas is further defined with examples of behavior.

Key Features:

- The mission statement for professional support staff was the foundation for developing the evaluation criteria and focused on themes common to the support services team.
- The Framework was the product of collaborative efforts by district administrators and support service staff.
- The Framework complemented similar efforts on behalf of teachers and administrators.

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, GOLDEN, COLO.

Personnel Categories with Evaluation Systems: Counselors, Library Media Specialists, and Special Education Related Services.

Description of Evaluation System: The major areas of responsibility are professional preparation and growth, human relations, professional techniques, and professional conduct. Each area is subdivided into standards and criteria.

Key Features:

- The Certificated Staff Performance Standards complemented documents for teachers and administrators.

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Personnel Categories with Evaluation Systems: Counselors, Psychologists/Psychometrists, Library Media Specialists, and Central Office Staff members.

Goals of Evaluation System: To assist educators through performance evaluation and professional growth to deliver quality educational services.

Description of Evaluation System: Areas of responsibility (competencies) vary by professional area, but are further defined by indicators and definitions.

Key Features:

- Evaluation procedures for specialty areas complement those for teachers and administrators.
- Multiple sources of documentation are encouraged and include review of documents, observation, structured interviews with evaluatees, and questionnaires from administrators.
- All elements of the evaluation system were reviewed by advisory committees and practicing professionals as part of the testing and piloting.
- Rigorous and comprehensive training is considered essential for evaluators.

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Personnel Categories with Evaluation Systems: Each certificated employee whose primary responsibility is not that of classroom teacher, such as nurse, educational diagnostician, guidance counselor, or librarian, is a "specialist" and evaluated by the specialist procedures.

Goals of Evaluation System: Assessment of instructional performance to improve the quality of instruction, prescribe professional development activities, and develop a foundation for administrative decisions.

Description of Evaluation System: The categories of evaluation criteria parallel those for teachers, but reflect the specialist orientation: planning, preparation, organization and management, strategies and techniques, specialist/student/staff interaction, monitoring/evaluating performance, and related responsibilities. Examples are provided for each category.

Key Features:

- Steps in the evaluation process include a pre-observation conference, data collection, formative conferences/reports (minimum of two), and a performance appraisal/conference.
- Assessment methods include observation and job analysis. Forms are provided for observational notes, job analysis, final appraisal, improvement plans, and appraisal responses.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Personnel Categories with Evaluation Systems: School Counselor, School Social Worker, Media Specialist, Speech-Language Pathologist, School Psychologist.

Goals of Evaluation System: 1) identify and reinforce effective professional practices, 2) identify areas where improvement can enhance services to students, and 3) identify personnel who do not meet the minimum standards so that appropriate action can be taken.

Description of Evaluation System: Evaluation criteria and instruments for service area practitioners have been developed to be consistent with each other whenever possible to build on similarities while recognizing different roles. Evaluation manuals for each professional area provide sections on research/rationale, key points, sample effective practices, and suggested assessment methods for each area of responsibility.

Key Features:

- Assessment methods include observation, record review, interviews, and optional surveys. Sample forms support each assessment method.
- Steps in the evaluation process are orientation, pre-evaluation conference, assessment methods, conferences, annual summary report, annual evaluation conference, and professional development plan.
- All elements of the evaluation system were reviewed by advisory committees and practicing professionals during the extensive testing and piloting.
- Extensive training was provided when the model was introduced.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Write to CREATE (Center for Research on Educational Accountability and Teacher Evaluation):

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Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5178
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Products are available on:

- Improvement of Teacher Performance Evaluation
- Improvement of School Evaluation
- Improvement of Administrator and Support Personnel Evaluation
- The Personnel Evaluation Standards
- The Program Evaluation Standards

For a list of publications write to:

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Products available include:

Counselor Evaluation Handbook, 1994

Library/Media Specialist Evaluation Handbook, 1994

School Psychologist Evaluation Handbook, available June 1995

School Nurse Evaluation Handbook, available June 1995

Stronge, J. H. "Evaluating Teachers and Support Personnel." In *Program Leadership for Serving Students with Disabilities*, edited by B. S. Billingsley. Richmond, Va.: Virginia Department of Education, 1993.

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Practitioner is a quarterly publication of the research department of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Dr., Reston, Va. 22091-1537, telephone (703) 860-0200. Copyright 1995 by NASSP. Annual subscription rate of $4 is included in NASSP dues; individual subscriptions are not available. Additional copies may be ordered: single copies, $2 each ($3 for nonmembers); 2–10 copies, $1.75 each ($2.75 for nonmembers); 11–99 copies, $1.25 each ($2.25 for nonmembers); 100 or more copies, $1.15 each ($2.15 for nonmembers). Payment must accompany orders of $15 or less.

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